



Illustration by Jeanne R. Janish,
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ERIOPHORUM GRACILE **SLENDER COTTONGRASS**

Slender Cottongrass is a grass-like perennial with single erect stems that are 20-60 cm high, and arise from slender rhizomes. The long basal and stem leaves are 1-2 mm wide and deeply channeled or triangular in cross-section except near the stem. The uppermost leaf has a blade that is shorter than the sheathing portion surrounding the stem. Flowers are borne in 2-5, stalked, head-like spikelets arising from the stem tips and subtended by a single green, leaf-like bract that is shorter than the inflorescence. The spikelet stalks are covered with dense, short, soft hairs. Each flower consists of numerous long, shining, white bristles at the base of the ovary and a lance-shaped, greenish black or brown scale with a slender midrib that ends well below the tip. The light brown seeds are 2-4 mm long and 3-5 times as long as wide. The mature bristles are ca. 2 cm long. Flowering in late June - early July.

Both *ERIOPHORUM VIRIDICARINATUM* and the more common *E. POLYSTACHION* have two or more leaf-like bracts subtending the inflorescence, at least one of which is longer than the spikelets. Both of these species also have black seeds and leaves that are flat for most of their length.